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Fall E-reference Update, 2010 Part 2: E-books

Sue Polanka

Wright State University - Main Campus, sue.polanka@wright.edu

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Fall E-reference Update, 2010 Part 2: E-books

by Jack O’Gorman and Sue Polanka

Four years ago, RBB featured its first article comparing electronic reference aggregator and publisher interfaces, and a second article followed in the November 1, 2007, issue. Three years later, we are taking another detailed look at the e-book interfaces and offerings from reference publishers. Much has changed in three years, particularly with the interface features and access to content. Audio, video, Flash animations, Web 2.0 tools like bookmarking and note taking, access to content through the open web, and mobile devices and applications have all appeared, and continue to grow. A new word, *discoverability*, emerged as well: the ability for users to find and use scholarly reference content hidden behind firewalls and passwords. Discoverability will continue to drive the future of electronic reference product development. But for the here and now, we offer this matrix to describe and compare the e-book services and features of six reference publishers: ABC-CLIO, Credo Reference, Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL), Infobase, Oxford Reference Online, and Sage Reference Online. Referring to this chart, reviewers can focus upon what is distinctive about the content and features of an electronic reference platform.

	ABC-CLIO	Credo	GVRL	Infobase	Oxford	Sage
Type of content	Reference, multivolume encyclopedias, professional development, variety of hot-topic issues/current events	Encyclopedias and such dictionaries as quotation, bilingual, and crossword	Reference, multivolume encyclopedias, Spanish language, travel guides, professional development titles for K–12	Circulating and reference books	Reference guides, dictionaries, Companions, and other reference sources	Multi- and single-volume encyclopedias, glossaries, handbooks for the social sciences and allied health
Audience	School, public, and academic libraries and general readers	School, public, and academic libraries	School, public, academic, and special libraries	School, public, and academic libraries	School, public, and academic libraries	High-school, public, and academic libraries
#Titles available	6,500+	500+	6,000+	3,500+	200+	210+
Publishers included	5	70+	70+	6	1	1
Update frequency/titles added	As titles are added, 30–50 per month	As titles are added, monthly updates	As titles are added, at least 100 per month	50–80 per month	Three times per year; factual corrections throughout the year	As titles are added, approximately 70 per year
Access	Via IP and remote or username/password	Via IP and remote	Via IP and remote	Via IP and remote	Via IP and remote access or username/password; personal subscription also available	Via IP and remote or username/password
Business models	One-time purchase; no hosting fees for first five years	Subscriptions; additional content is extra	One-time purchase of individual titles; professional development titles also by package	One-time purchase of individual titles or subject collection	Subscription	One-time purchase of collections or individual titles
Cost	FTE e-book pricing begins at parity with print pricing	Contact vendor	Based on FTE or population ratio	100 percent of print price for individual schools; FTE or cardholders influence prices	Contact vendor	Individual titles; discounts apply for collections
Library customization features	Library branding	Library branding, custom menu links, links to library resources	Library URL only	Library branding, MARC records, search widgets, library logo, direct URL for each e-book	Subscriber logo display, search box	Library branding and URL customization under development

	ABC-CLIO	Credo	GVRL	Infobase	Oxford	Sage
Search features	Keyword, title, author; search within title and across collection, advanced search including Boolean, saved search history	Keyword, relevance, rank, date display, Boolean searching, search within headings, browse by title, "Topic Pages"	Keyword, browse, subject clusters; limit searches to images, date subject, target audience	Keyword, author, ISBN, imprint, subject	Quick search; search by title or subject; advanced search includes Boolean, pattern, multiple subject, people, entry headings, and full text	Quick and advanced search of full text, within fielded Boolean facets
Results list features	Sort by relevance, titles, author, publication date	Facets; send search to other library resources, related people	Search within results; change sort order; limit by publication type	Limit results by subject, relevancy ranked, change results view, and number of items displayed	Refine search by longer entries, shorter entries, bilingual dictionaries, and maps in illustrations	Search within results; sort or limit results by facet; relevancy ranked
Output features	Print, e-mail, download, export citations to citation software	Print, e-mail, download, copy to clipboard, export to citation software	Print, e-mail, download, export to citation software	Print, e-mail, download	Print, e-mail	Print, e-mail, download (page view), citations
Unique interface features	"Did You Mean?" suggestions, content presented by chapter/entry rather than page by page	Concept mapping and image searching, video and audio clips, Flash animation	Translate to eight different languages and read aloud via ReadSpeaker	Password-protected notes, bookmarks, includes dictionary tool	Link to ProQuest/Chadwyck-Healy Literature Online	Readers' Guide for each title; banner identifies title being viewed; search library catalogs from bibliographies
Format	HTML	HTML	HTML, PDF, MP3	PDF, HTML (fall 2010)	HTML	HTML; front/back matter in PDF (multimedia titles coming in January)
Internal links	TOC, endnotes, index, cross-references, and see also	Cross-references, TOC, "Topic Finder"	TOC, index, images, charts	TOC; index is not linked	TOC, cross-references, headwords, and time-line links	TOC, A-Z readers' guides, index
Persistent URL level	Title, entries, chapters	Title, entry, images	Titles, entries, images, each page	Titles, chapters, page	Titles, entries, each page	Titles, entries, chapters
Use data	COUNTER compliant	COUNTER compliant and on-demand	COUNTER and SUSHI compliant, e-mail options	Use tracking and reporting available	ICOLC stats available	COUNTER compliant
Web 2.0 features	Bookmarks and notes	Share through social media	Tagging	Notes, bookmarks	"Fact of the Day"	In development
DRM (limits on save/print/export)	Printing and e-mailing by chapter or entry; no entire book/volume	Entries may be printed, e-mailed, saved, or shared; no entire book/volume	Entries may be printed, e-mailed, saved, or bookmarked; no entire book/volume	Individual pages may be printed, e-mailed, or saved; no entire book/volume	Subscription suspended if more than 3,500 pages are downloaded in one session	Entries may be printed, e-mailed, saved, or shared; no entire book/volume
Discoverability techniques used	Federated and discovery search compatibility	"Topic Pages"	Access My Library via search engines and mobile application; search widgets; subcollections; cross-search with other GVRL databases	Search widgets	API used by MuseGlobal and Serials Solutions federated search; titles routinely added to Serials Solutions and Ex Libris knowledge bases	First 200 words in search engines; metadata delivery to federated and discovery search tools
Mobile platforms	Forthcoming	None	Access My Library	None	None	None, under investigation
Smart-phone/reader compatibility	Via most Internet-enabled devices	Via most Internet-enabled devices	Via most Internet-enabled devices	None	Via most Internet-enabled devices	Via most Internet-enabled devices